

THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE'S IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE POOR PEOPLES' CAMPAIGN OF 1968

A THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Too many black organizations have come into existence and then disappeared without any record of their objectives, programs they implemented, or their accomplishments. An attempt will be made in this paper to record as factually and as objectively as possible an organization's efforts to expose poverty and hunger in the United States. This organization is the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which played a major role in the Poor Peoples' Campaign of 1968.

There is a great need to reexamine such events as the Poor Peoples' Campaign from a black perspective. This effort has been scrutinized for the most part by white researchers and journalist. Professors Mack Jones and Alex Willingham of Atlanta University refer to these people as the white custodians of the Black Experience.¹ It is Jones and Willingham's contention that these whites who incorporate the black experience into their analyses tend to obscure and even distort the black struggle in America. This is not to say that white people are incapable of giving an interpretation that is factual, but when only one perspective is presented, often from afar, objectivity has its limitations. Ideally, to be objective is to consider something without bias or prejudice. But in

¹"The White Custodians of the Black Experience," Social Science Quarterly (June, 1970), p. 31.

American society where the black and white races are polarized to a great extent, so-called objectivity may only represent a partisan viewpoint. One considers what one wants to consider or what is popular, beneficial, or even profitable to make a point.

Black people for a long time were uncritical of white interpretations. This changed through the awareness of such black scholars as W. E. B. Dubois, Franklin E. Frazier, Carter G. Woodson, Charles S. Johnson, and Alain Locke who developed new angles, perspectives, and frameworks, giving black people a sense of worthiness and interpretations to which they could relate. This approach has been termed the black perspective. This black perspective attempts to free blacks from the oppressor, mentally and hopefully to eventually free them economically, politically, and physically, as well.

Various Civil Rights organizational efforts in the 1950's and 1960's spurred the federal, state, and local government to do something about the plight of black people. The consequences of these actions require an objective evaluation. This, in part, can be accomplished by obtaining the viewpoints of the people directly involved in the action. In relationship to the Poor Peoples' Campaign, there are some rather disturbing interpretations given by some white authorities, for example through Charles Fager who had been affiliated with SCLC in earlier days. The supposedly factual and objective interpretations of these authorities reveal that they did not understand the Campaign, could not understand the Campaign, or refused to understand the Campaign focusing on the problems of the poor. Consequently, the interpretations put forward by these authorities were inadequate.

The general idea of this paper is to structure and reexamine the Poor Peoples' Campaign of 1968, which was initiated by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Attention will be given to the Campaign itself, and the events that took place after the campaign was implemented. Furthermore, an attempt will be made to develop generalizations about this political event which may be useful in the evaluation of other similar activities.

There have been only a few scholarly attempts to arrange chronologically and interpret the events surrounding the Poor Peoples' Campaign. Black writers such as Benjamin Mays and David Lewis (author of King: A Critical Biography) attempted to assess the Campaign's real worth. Written work relevant to this investigation on the Poor Peoples' Campaign is dispersed and most of it is contained in periodicals. The major problem continues to be the need to search for and identify all relevant sources that could prove valuable in expanding the subject matter.

I have already noted that many frames of reference are Eurocentric and are usually negative, biased, and not applicable to the black experience. Therefore, an attempt will be made to develop and strengthen a frame of reference that explains and interprets this event's relationship to the black experience. Also, it is important to understand the interrelationship of other concepts that pertain to a political action of this nature, such as leadership and symbolism.

As a result of restructuring and evaluating various phases of the Poor Peoples' Campaign, I expected to develop some indications as to the credibility of the Campaign as well as its unworthiness. I anticipated that a political action of this nature would have its positive points

and its not-so-positive points during its actual implementation. Furthermore, from a study of the sort, it can possibly be assumed how effective a similar political action would be during this day and time.

Even though the data is limited and dispersed, a lot of it can and was collected from sources that are available such as periodicals, publications of SCLC, books, correspondences of SCLC members, speeches, and interviews. An interview was obtained from Reverend Ralph David Abernathy. This interview is in the personal possession of the author. Other tools for this research are limited and many are not made available for various reasons. One of the reasons is that there is a general reluctance on the part of many black organizations to permit studies because of paranoia and anti-intellectualism. Many organizations are even reluctant to release information dating back several years ago. The political climate of this country may make this necessary. As a result, certain proprietors believe it is too soon to release certain things that might have added to the enlightenment of this paper.

As a result of these obstacles, I have had to research this matter by relying on the best material I could find. I have used the historical approach to develop my arguments. Other tools employed are library research, correspondence, and the review of various records and documents pertaining to SCLC. I have found the Congressional Record to be particularly useful.

CHAPTER II

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The Reaction of Blacks to the Ills of American Society

There are many illls in American society. This fact is very hard for a great number of people to accept. Some who have been made aware of these illls carry on as if the afflictions were not there. These illls are varied, ranging from unemployment and poverty to drug addiction, crime, racism, and political victimization, and they affect a great number of people. Many individuals, families, and organizations are indirectly affected as well. It is interesting to note that many ethnic groups in American society are constantly victimized by these illls. In fact, some of these illls have become a way of life for many racial minorities.

For many, especially the minority group member with disadvantages in education and skill, poverty is qualitatively different than it was 50 years ago for the immigrant. Poverty is not viewed by these people as a transitory state but as a human condition of life. The opportunity structure is perceived as restrictive and not easily susceptible to change. The immigrant in 1900 could hope for the American dream to touch his children, but the ghetto Negro today can only see his child caught up in the same cycle of disadvantages that he has experienced.²

These illls have not gone unquestioned among the black race. After World War I, the civil and human rights of black people became an issue.

²Louis A. Ferman, Joyce L. Kornbluh, and Alan Haber, editors, Poverty in America (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 1968), p. XIX.

The NAACP was one of many organizations during this period to make civil and human rights an issue. Segregation entailed a political philosophy that denied black people these rights. Such denial was thought of by many as only existing in the segregated South. Therefore, thinking that things would be better for them there, many black people left the South and migrated to the North. But they found things were no better and that racial exclusion existed in the North as well. Kenneth Clark's detailed account in Dark Ghetto, relating primarily to Harlem, exposes the northern predicament.

Inferior conditions and unfair and harsh treatment complemented segregation in America. For black people it meant inferior housing, education, employment, etc. For blacks, especially those who had defended America in a time of need during World War II and had been exposed to better treatment, this kind of thing was repulsive and intolerable. Black people began to put various kinds of pressures on the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government at the national, state, and local level. A few results were obtained. In 1950 the Supreme Court ruled that segregation of blacks on interstate railways was unlawful. Also, by 1950 black people in various parts of the nation, South Carolina and Georgia for example, were allowed to vote. They had already been voting in various parts of the North for some time. In 1956 the Negroes led a successful boycott in Montgomery against the city bus lines' segregated seating policy. This whole Movement is traced in King's book, Stride Toward Freedom. In 1957 a civil rights act was passed. In 1960 the Sit-in Movement was initiated by college students in Greensboro, North Carolina. It was also around this very time that the Southern Christian Leadership

Conference moved to adopt the sit-in as a means of protest and popularized its use. SCLC political philosophy stressed nonviolence.

King Recognizing Ills

During the 1950's a black man by the name of Martin Luther King Jr. became prominent as a spokesman for black people. King became head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This organization was founded in 1957 after the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He expressed the dissatisfaction over the black people's predicament of which was complicated by racism and poverty and moved to incorporate the alleviation of these ills in the goals of this civil rights organization. The situation against which he fought was well expressed by the editors of Poverty in America.

Poverty in this generation was rediscovered in a social and political context that has given a public awareness and scrutiny of the problem relatively unique in our history. Although numerically more whites than Negroes are poor, the poverty problem has become closely identified in the public mind with civil rights unrest.³

King attempted to carry on dialogue with those responsible for the ills, those who were victimized by the ills, and those who were in a position to do something about the ills. Of course King was not the first black man to react to racism and poverty in the way that he did, for there were other notables before him, who had voiced similar concerns. The only real difference is that Dr. King is contemporary.

Those who are victimized by the ills are usually members of the oppressed class. M. Darrol Bryant gives an interpretation of the relationship of the political structures and oppressed people.

³Ibid.

Present political structures and oppressed people seem incapable of handling the grievances of the oppressed and thus are incapable of responding in a way which involves significant change. The present order seems able only to respond to economic and political power both of which the poor do not have at present in an organized way.⁴

⁴M. Darrol Bryant, To Whom It May Concern (Philadelphia: Fortune Press, 1969), p. 40.

SUMMARY

The makings for a Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the fifties grew out of the fact that American society was a contradiction to the American principles of equality, justice, and freedom for everyone. The poor, hungry and oppressed in America were obvious examples of this contradiction. For many (with racial minorities taking the lead), these contradictions were a way of life resented by these victims.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference grew out of the fact that many of those in this downtrodden predicament refused to continue to live in such a way. As a result many of these people began to look in the direction of organizing. History shows there were organizations such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was an outgrowth of organizing. SCLC's way of doing something about the predicament may not have been the same as these other black organizations but its aim definitely was the same as the others-- to make sure that civil and human rights were meted out indiscriminately and to make sure that the poor, hungry, and oppressed were not shortchanged in their freedom, justice, and equality.

One other realization was that in organization there is strength. SCLC organized masses of people around issues such as unemployment, poverty, crime, political victimization and racism. Through organizing it was felt that many of these ills could be corrected or alleviated. Pressures were put on various agencies and branches of government to do something.

Martin Luther King was the president of SCLC. He set out to remedy the ills of American society. What he did was to incorporate the ills of American society into the goals of this Civil Rights organization. King was an instrumental and charismatic figure of this organization.

CHAPTER III

A NEW DIRECTION FOR THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

During the last years of Dr. King's life, many events affected him in a way that made him speak out. These issues made many say that Dr. King was definitely headed to the left. He was outspoken on the Vietnam War, causes of riots, and poverty. He was warned against association with leftists. The influential liberal circle felt uneasy by his new stance on various issues.

During the last years of his life, events--chiefly the Vietnam War and the related tides of black militancy and ghetto uprisings--seemed to conspire to drive Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. leftward. Dr. King moved left with considerable reluctance, for his was a conservative personality at home in the largely white liberal elite of which his achievements had made him a pillar and from which he drew substantial support.⁵

Dr. King was very concerned about jobs and other economic opportunities. Many of his associates were knowledgeable about jobs and economic opportunities. One of these knowledgeable associates was Marian Wright Edelman. According to Coretta Scott King in My Life With Martin Luther King, Mrs. Edelman had worked with the poor in Mississippi and had also been very active in the nation's capital. Therefore, she was familiar with many programs available to poor people. According to Mrs. King,

⁵Charles E. Fager, Uncertain Resurrection (New York: Ferdmans, 1969), p. 13.

Marian had talked with a number of congressmen and government officials and she told Martin that she felt the climate was ready for some major thrust in the nonviolent movement toward improvement of economic conditions. They thought that even the President might welcome some such move which would provide the federal government with a stimulus for action.⁶

Dr. King apparently became excited about the idea. His ideas about a Campaign of this nature were extensive. His ideas included people going to Washington to plead their case to all the departments of government, the recruitment of people from poverty areas all over the United States, and the selection of a variety of people: Blacks, American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and poor whites. King said,

We should get people from all the poverty areas from the South and from the North, people who don't have jobs or resources. We must get them marching toward Washington. I think it would really dramatize the issues. It must not be just black people, it must be all poor people. We must include American Indians, Puerto Ricans, the Mexicans and even poor whites. . .⁷

King's ideas were approved by the SCLC board and the staff began to plan. It was decided that the first group of participants were to be selected from ten cities and later from five rural areas that would be named at a later date. Approximately, two hundred people were to be selected from each of these areas to make the journey to Washington.

Planning Continues

Around mid-March Dr. King's staff finished the master plan for the Poor Peoples' Campaign. The March issues of the Pittsburgh Courier and the Washington Afro-American carried articles concerning the plans.

⁶Coretta King, My Life With Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 297.

⁷Ibid.

The master plan called for the initial cadres to be drawn from ten cities and five rural districts located in the East, midwest, South and Appalachia. They would come from such places as the Roxbury community of Boston, Lawndale community of Chicago, Mississippi, and West Virginia. On April 20 they were to start paying visits to the Senate, House of Representatives, and other agencies, such as the Departments of Agriculture, Health, Education and Welfare and Housing and Urban Development.

One thing which the participants were going to promote was a \$12 Billion economic bill of rights guaranteeing employment to all able-bodied people, an end to housing discrimination, sufficient incomes to those unable to work, and the enforcement of school integration.

The demands were intentionally vague, not restricted to specific legislation in order to guard against the seductions of empty promises and legislative feints.⁸

In the month of February, 1968, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference opened up an office in Washington, D.C. which was to serve as a headquarters for the Poor Peoples March. Other minority groups (poor whites from Appalachia, Puerto Ricans, Indians, etc.) met in Atlanta in March of 1968 at King's invitation to discuss ways they could participate in the Campaign and to see if each of their demands could be incorporated into a common program. Many left this meeting feeling they could participate and their demands incorporated. This was described by Coretta Scott King in My Life With Martin Luther King, Jr. She attended.

It took a lot of preparation for the march. Various things had to be planned: medical supplies, housing, food, etc. Dr. King went on tours

⁸David Lewis, King: A Critical Biography (New York: Prager, 1976), p. 373.

around the country to recruit people for the Campaign. Many people were receptive to his idea.

Preparations for the march were endless. There were many ideas as to how the Poor Peoples' March could be conducted. The April 6 issue of the Washington Afro-American newspaper quoted James Peterson (administrative assistant of the Washington SCLC office) as saying that two committees had been set up to handle the Campaign while King was still alive. According to this article, one of the committees was called the City of New Hope. This committee was to be responsible for housing, food, youth involvement, education, medical and general services, and administration. The other committee was the Supporting Committee, which was to be responsible for legal services, publicity, recreation, social services, transportation, etc.

There were other plans being made in Atlanta. There, Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership staff were busy working out the timetables and mapping routes for the Poor Peoples' March.⁹ It was also stated that participants in the Campaign from Baltimore, Philadelphia, Newark, New York, and Boston would travel on foot to Washington.¹⁰ Those participants from Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Carolina, and Virginia were to travel via mule, horse, and wagon train. Other caravans were to come from Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and other parts of the West.¹¹

⁹"Poor People's March Moved Back to April 22," Pittsburgh Courier, March 16, 1968, p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

At one of these preparatory meetings it was decided that the March would take place April 22. Coincidentally this date was the same as the capital's annual Cherry Blossom Festival. Every year thousands of people flocked to Washington for the event. It was hoped that many people would be exposed to the Poor Peoples' Campaign and become involved.

Relationship of Voters' Registration and Memphis
to the Poor Peoples' Campaign

The Poor Peoples' Campaign was developed at a time when the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was actively involved in a voters' registration drive in Cleveland, approximately 50,000 were registered. As a result, Carl Stokes became the first black Mayor of an American city-- Cleveland. According to Coretta King in My Life With Martin Luther King, Jr., King felt Stokes election would be an inspiration to black people all over the world.

In Memphis, Tennessee the Sanitation Workers Union had gone on strike for better wages. Most of the workers were black. The brutality of the police broke up a peaceful demonstration staged by the strikers.

It was early spring (1968) that King became somewhat uneasy about things. His wife describes it as follows:

Martin was experiencing great anxiety, not only about the Poor Peoples' March on Washington. There was much criticism in the press about so great a number of people converging on the city. It was surely felt that the demonstration would surely bring violence to the capital of the United States.¹²

King is reported to have been asked to join the protest in Memphis by various people in Memphis. The exact names of those who asked him were

¹²King, op. cit., p. 312.

not available. Against the advice of many of those in SCLC, he decided to participate. So he temporarily delayed the Poor Peoples' Campaign in order to participate in the garbage strike. He apparently felt the strike and march were important and consistent with the Poor Peoples' Campaign.

Of course, many reasons are given as to why he delayed the Poor Peoples' Campaign. Among them is the press coverage following the announcement of the Poor Peoples' Campaign. Most of the national media (controlled mainly by whites) gave very negative announcements, such as the New York Post with headlines like "Poor March: Army Ready for Trouble." The Campaign was projected as if it were to be composed of the worst human elements and set to produce violence and bloodshed. Reasoning, Dr. King considered a peaceful and nonviolent march in Memphis to be very important in helping to improve attitudes about the forthcoming Washington March. But what followed was very discouraging. Violence and looting took place during the Memphis March of March 28, 1968. This Memphis incident made headlines in just about every periodical. The city was put under a curfew and National Guardsmen were called into the city to restore order. It has been suggested that militancy complicated by violence dominated the atmosphere during the supposedly nonviolent demonstration.

Recently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was exposed for its tamperance in activities similar to this one during the sixties.

It is revealed in various pertainable Memoranda and files that SCLC was among the organizations to be spied upon and infiltrated during the sixties. Therefore, the great possibility that the atmosphere for violence was created by agent provocateurs to lessen the credibility of King exists. This opinion is very reasonable to me but hard to prove.¹³

¹³This point will be dealt with indepth on pages 24-25.

On March 31, Dr. King made a speech at the National Cathedral in Washington which was really more or less a response to the negative criticism which he and the intended marchers had received. He said,

We are not coming to Washington to engage in any historic action, nor are we coming to tear up Washington. I don't like to predict violence, but if nothing is done between now and June to raise ghetto hope, I feel this summer will not only be as bad, but worse than last year.¹⁴

SCLC is a nonviolent organization. SCLC has followed the creed of nonviolence from its inception. One writer says:

Nonviolence is not passive. It is an active creative form of political involvement. It is a way of using power. It is active not at the level of physical coercion but rather aims at the heart and mind. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference believes the cynical will find this difficult, perhaps impossible to accept--that when men and societies are confronted by the truth, they can be turned around.¹⁵

King took the stance that the national government is responsible for violence. He expressed this idea in various speeches. He considered the government responsible for the violence which occurred the summer preceding the Poor Peoples' Campaign. He predicted that violence would occur again if the causes for it were not alleviated. King expressed his opinion in his last letter asking for support of the Poor Peoples' March:

Our national government is playing Russian roulette with riots; it gambles with another summer of disaster. Not a single basic cause of riots has been corrected. Though ample resources are available they are squandered substantially

¹⁴Ben W. Gilbert and the Staff of the Washington Post. Ten Blocks From the White House: Anatomy of the Washington Riots of 1968 (New York: F. A. Prager, 1968), p. 11.

¹⁵Bryant, op. cit., p. 27.

on war. However, the inhumanity and irresponsibility of Congress and the administration are not a reflection of popular attitudes-legislation to abolish slums and end all unemployment have been endorsed by a wide majority of the American people in reputable polls. Yet, these positive proposals like the recommendations of the President's Commission on Civil Disorders, will be filed away to gather dust if the people do not generate relentless press on Congress.

It was obdurate government callousness to misery that first stroked the flames of rage and frustration. With unemployment a scourge in Negro ghettos, the government still tinkers with trivial half-hearted measures, refuses still to become an employer of last resort. It asks the business community to solve the problem as though its past failures qualified it for future success.¹⁶

Congress Reactions to the Poor Peoples' Campaign

In Congress the dominant feelings about the March were similar to those of the news media. Not many of those sympathetic to the March spoke out in favor of it during its initial phase. Excerpts from the Congressional Records of the Ninetieth Congress reflects much negativism.

Mr. Brock (Representative from Tennessee) accused the U.S. Government of being "actively engaged in the subsidization of its own disruption and destruction"¹⁷ due to the fact that it granted tax exempt status to groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference who were to lobby in Washington.

¹⁶U.S. Congress, House, (article submitted for Record by Representative Basil Whitener from I. Stone's Weekly, April 15, 1968), 90th Cong., 2nd sess., April 22, 1968, p. 10118.

¹⁷U.S. Congress, House, (remarks of Representative W. E. Brock), 90th Cong., 2nd Sess., April 4, 1968, p. 9036.

Congressman Michel of Illinois called upon the Rev. Martin Luther King to abandon his role, otherwise, racial peace, harmony and national unity would be taken aback. According to Congressman Michel, many black citizens throughout the country were in agreement with him. The Congressman is recorded saying of Dr. King: 'His return to private life would be a healing and constructive act to advance the cause to which he had dedicated himself and also will help preserve national unity.'¹⁸

THE NEWS MEDIA AFTER THE MEMPHIS INCIDENT

After the Memphis incident, the press did not refrain from its negative criticism of the planned Poor Peoples' March and Dr. King. The news media seemed to express a fear that was already present and thus created more. News articles stated that Dr. King would be, or had been influenced by Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael and others termed "undesirables." One article said,

. . . King has recently conferred privately with the nation's most notorious black powerites: H. Rap Brown, the demagogic chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, now under indictment for inciting a tragic riot in Cambridge, Md. and Stokely Carmichael the self professed revolutionary who globetrotted across the communist world from Havanna to Hanoi last year. . . .¹⁹

Paralyzation of the nation's capital was another issue expressed by the press:

¹⁸U.S. Congress, House, (remarks of Representative Robert H. Michel), 90th Congress, 2nd Sess., April 4, 1968, p. 9035.

¹⁹William Schulz, 'Martin Luther King's March on Washington, Reader's Digest, April, 1968, p. 69.

. . . King has declared to demand an end to poverty--and if necessary "to make it clear the city will not function." Behind his threat lie months of detailed planning. With the prestige and perhaps the safety of America's capital at stake, the authorities must be prepared for the worst, a Washington paralyzed by a so-called Poor Peoples Army.²⁰

Another issue to be raised by the press was the embarrassment and humiliation of the United States if the campaign were staged.

One thing is certain whether or not all the protesters' plans materialize, the nation faces international humiliation as a result of the Washington campaign. Communism's worldwide propaganda apparatus is set for a field day. Communist bloc newsmen will cable home Washington dateline dispatches on the "starvation" and "misery" of oppressed Americans." Powerful transmitters will beam the distorted accounts to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. "If this demonstration gets out of hand," says Stefan Possony, one of the country's top experts on psychological warfare, "if there is any violence at all, the damage to our prestige would be incalculable."²¹

This article contained strong statements against King and the Poor Peoples' Campaign. However, the attack did not stop here. Attacks came to be much stronger as time drew near for the Campaign. One article went so far as to tactfully suggest or imply that maybe something should be done about King if he persisted in implementing the Poor Peoples' Campaign:

Dr. King eloquently defends the "validity and justifiability" of nonviolent civil disobedience, insisting that citizens have a moral obligation to violate unjust laws. This philosophy has taken deep root, and basic freedoms are endangered by it.²²

Thus, overnight Dr. King became a threat to the system for his views against the maintenance and continuation of poverty and hunger.

²⁰Ibid., p. 65.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

The atmosphere surrounding Dr. King's life became somewhat uneasy. His strong position on several issues were unappealing to certain segments. The negative articles continued -- for example:

By publicly condoning the tactics of disruption, the Nobel Prize winning King has given them a legitimacy and a respectability they do not deserve. If he continues such policies, not only he--but all of us--will be the losers.²³

Some people said that The Civil Rights Movement and the Poor Peoples' Campaign were very much one. From the black press, Benjamin Mays (black Civil Rights activist) voiced this idea in a weekly newspaper column of his during the planning stage of the Poor Peoples' Campaign of 1968. This very column was so timely because it came at a time when the coverage of the campaign was so negative. He wrote,

The objectives of the Civil Rights March were clear. They were designed to dramatize the evil and stir the conscience of the nation so that something would be done to abolish the evil inherent in discrimination in public places and the evil embodied in the practice of barring Negroes from the use of the ballot.

The current march is the first one that strikes at the poverty which plagues the poor. . . This is the first march to get the poor peoples themselves to rise up in a non-violent way to do something about their plight. This makes it unique. The purpose of the Poor Peoples March does not differ widely from the purpose of the Civil Rights March in that they all aim to dramatize the plight of the victims and arouse the conscience of the nation to do something to alleviate the condition for the people to march.²⁴

King's convictions and dedication had made him an influential man. He had acquired a strong following. At one time criticisms of him appear

²³Ibid.

²⁴Benjamin E. Mays, "Why Poor People's March," Pittsburgh Courier, June 1, 1968, p. 6.

to have been conducive to the national government and unappealing to state and local governments which still had Jim Crow laws on the books. However, as time passed, his views were not even conducive to the national government. Deep suspicion now surrounds the circumstances of Dr. King's assassination. There is SCLC who has always taken the position that King's assassination was a conspiracy. He was assassinated April 4, 1968 in the midst of the Memphis garbage strike and the Poor Peoples' Campaign.

The system undoubtedly wants to control and dictate how it is to be attacked. The system wants to have the say-so over who's going to attack it, the type of attack or demonstration (if it is going to be peaceful and nonviolent), and then on top of that say when a demonstration is to begin and end.

POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN KING'S ASSASSINATION

Recently (1973-74) strong indications suggest that maybe the Federal Bureau of Investigation was behind the assassination of Dr. King, and interfered with the SCLC efforts. On March 7, 1973, Attorney General William Saxbe made public memoranda containing information on the FBI's disruption of various organizations. Carl Stern, an NBC reporter sued for these documents under the Freedom of Information Act. Others filed suit such as the Socialist Workers' Party and the Young Socialist Alliance. One commentator said:

The FBI paper never meant to be read by the American people reveals the fear and hatred the ruling powers in Washington feel toward the Black Liberation movement and the degree to which they are willing to cast aside their own laws to repress and destroy the movement.²⁵

²⁵Baxter Smith, "Memos Show FBI Plot Against Black Movement," The Militant, March 22, 1974, p. 332.

The memoranda was written by J. Edgar Hoover, late director of the FBI. The documents reveal counterintelligence programs from 1961 to 1971 against various individuals and organizations. Wiretaps, character defamation, agent provocateurs were among those methods used to lessen the strength of individuals and organizations. Political assassination is only strongly implied. Hoover was probably referring to Dr. King when he was talking about one who could unify and electrify the Black Nationalist Movement. He said,

He will be a very real contender for the position should he abandon his supposed obedience to white liberal doctrines (nonviolence) and embrace Black nationalism. He has the necessary charisma to be a threat in this way.²⁶

These documents definitely raise questions about the involvement of the FBI in the death of Martin Luther King and other Black leaders and also the unplanned disruptions encountered in SCLC efforts such as the Memphis garbage strike.

THE REACTION OF BLACK PEOPLE AFTER KING'S ASSASSINATION

King's assassination was reacted to with disbelief and grief, complemented by riots in Detroit, Newark, Chicago, and Washington. The riots in Washington came as a surprise, for many believed that Blacks had made considerable progress in the capital. Progress in this case, however, seems to have been measured by the black majority on the school board, and the large number of black federal employees and the black officials in the capital.

²⁶"FBI Sabotage Plan Unveiled," Jet, March 28, 1974, p. 29.

However, in Washington, D.C. a high infant mortality continued, public medical facilities were overcrowded, a high rate of illegitimacy existed, many children in school were reading below the national norm, and a high rate of unemployment left many families in poverty. Considering that Washington's population has been predominantly black for some time, it is only rational to assume that those affected the most were black. In fact, compared to the rest of the country, it may be proper to describe this predicament as disproportional to the rest of the United States.

After a notorious slum within camera range of the capital building was razed in the 1950's tourists rarely saw the other Washington. For years the other Washington away from the monument had done a shockingly poor job of teaching its children, healing its sick, caring for its needy, finding jobs for its hardcore unemployed and controlling crimes.²⁷

But a deprived Washington with all its problems is only an expression of what is found in other heavily black populated areas. Now, in addition to the ills of society, deprivation and neglect in the richest country in the world, black people were now without a leader. This realization alone makes a way for an understanding of Black peoples' reactions after Dr. King's assassination--a man who had set out to call attention to and to alleviate the discomforts of life through nonviolent protest.

²⁷Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

SUMMARY

The intent of the Poor Peoples' Campaign was supposedly to expose hunger and poverty. However, there may have been ulterior motives as were suggested. For instance, James Bevel (SCLC organizer) referred to white people as pathological killers and he suggested that the Poor Peoples' Campaign was an attempt to redirect the minds of white people from the issue of racism toward the issue of economic ills.

In the late sixties, the Civil Rights movement, of which King was a part, began to place emphasis on economics. This was a move away from the idea that racism was the reason for the predicament of Black people. Now it was being suggested that economics was the reason for the predicament.

There have always been a polarization of the races (black and white) in the United States, however, this polarization took on intensity during the sixties. At this time black people projected a renewed racial consciousness that made it clear that they did not intend to continue to be the underdogs in American society and that any rights and privileges that white people enjoyed, black people also had a right to enjoy them. Many white people became resentful of this frame of thinking by blacks. It was during this very period that many black political leaders were imprisoned on trumped-up charges, black organizations were spied upon and infiltrated, and many black leaders were assassinated. The mood became tense and confrontations between black and white people were on an upswing.

Relations between the various racial groups in the United States are very fragile. The steps to make communication immune to sensitivity have not been fully achieved. Many feel that the oppressor is the cause for this. But it is to the oppressors' benefit to keep racial groupings from uniting and especially minority racial groups.

It was around the mid-sixties that King began to evaluate the national government in such a way to deem him militant by certain elements. He accused the national government of not distributing wealth equally and accused the government of not being serious enough in seeing that any positive change be brought about. The position taken by King was unappealing to many people. Some people believe this position was the reason for his assassination.

Dr. King had initiated the Poor Peoples' Campaign before his death. He had wanted to bring the poor from all over the country together to dramatize their plight. His assassination may have postponed the Poor Peoples' Campaign but it did not stop it, for within a month it was put into operation by his successor, Reverend Ralph Abernathy. It was under the leadership of Abernathy that the Poor Peoples' Campaign was executed, giving many of the hungry, poor, and oppressed people in America the opportunity to come together for the first time to test their political impact.

CHAPTER IV

GOING TO WASHINGTON

There was a March on Washington Movement during the 1940's.

A. Phillip Randolph and Milton Webster of the Brotherhood of Labor organization were instrumental in this Movement. An effort was made to mobilize thousands of black people to march in Washington to demand jobs in the defense industry. Randolph is reported to have said:

Negro America must bring its power and pressure to bear upon the agencies and representatives of the Federal Government to exact their rights in National Defense employment and the armed forces of the country. . . .²⁸

Officials in Washington did not want this March to take place. One reason given was that it would create violence. Randolph insisted that the March would take place. On June 25, 1941, after much deliberation, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 declaring it to be the policy of the United States,

that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations . . . to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries.²⁹

²⁸Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1923), pp. 248-249.

²⁹Ibid., p. 259.

Randolph then cancelled the March, but later stated that the March on Washington would become a permanent Movement. The reasons for this:

. . . to campaign for a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission, to represent the temper of the masses at the time, and to engage in other protest activities.³⁰

No March actually took place in Washington before 1963 as a result of this March on Washington Movement.

Next was an actual March on Washington for jobs and freedom which was organized and led by Civil Rights leaders in 1963. A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Martin Luther King, Roy Wilkins and Walter Reuther played a major role. Several religious, labor and civic groups participated. In a detailed account by John Hope Franklin in his From Slavery To Freedom, diverse groups participated such as the American Jewish Congress, the AFL-CIO, Industrial Union Department, etc. Many people referred to this March as a "picnic." This March on Washington was intended to remind the conscience of the nation of its responsibility to the neglected. The Civil Rights Movement at this time had been overly concerned with reforming the conscience of white people.

Poor Peoples' March Implemented
By King's Successor

Now came the Poor Peoples' Campaign initiated by Dr. King and implemented by his successor. After Dr. King, Rev. Ralph Abernathy became head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and its 54 member Board of Directors, with Rev. J. E. Lowery as chairman.

³⁰Ibid., p. 262.

The Board of Directors make policy for SCLC. Programs are directed and carried out by the Executive Staff. Field organizers also help plan and direct programs.³¹ SCLC is a non-profit organization. Churches, local groups, foundations and public figures give financial support to the organization.

Some people accepted the fact that Abernathy was the successor. Others, however, were highly critical of the successor. Charles Fager (critic of Abernathy and former junior Southern Christian Leadership Conference staff member) says in his book Uncertain Resurrection,

A basic restructuring of the relationship between SCLC and its liberal constituency was probably inevitable upon Abernathy's elevation in any case, because he was such a different kind of person than his predecessor. Dr. King was aristocrat, raised in the upper levels of Atlanta's black professional class and educated at Morehouse, an elite black college. His PHD from Northern White Boston University guaranteed status among Negro preachers and provided entree with intellectuals. As he rose to prominence, his temperance and accomplishments filled him admirably with the white liberal elite represented by the Peabody, the National Council of Churches, and the New York Times. . . .

Ralph Abernathy on the other hand grew up on a farm in isolated black-belt Marengo County, Alabama. Three years ago he brought down the house in Selma churches with the story of his first goggled-eyed and breathless boyhood visits to the Metropolis, which must have been all of the 15,000 population then but was the largest city he had ever seen. His alma mater was Alabama State in Montgomery, a pathetic unaccredited state institution--that was not much more than a self debunking sop to Alabama's separate bait of equal mythology. Completed with a Master's at Atlanta University, his education left him a solid member of the black urban middle class, but his rural roots were never completely left behind, remaining noticeable as we have seen in his speaking style. . . .³²

³¹An organizational chart of SCLC is included in the appendix.

³²Fager, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

Another article appearing in Time magazine (May 31, 1968) referred to Abernathy in the following way:

. . . far less cerebral than his predecessor, he has shown an unhappy tendency to make inept remarks and to accept bad advice from ultramilitant SCLC officials whom King managed to keep in line. . . . Unless Abernathy settles down to some long-range planning in place of the pulpit vagueness he has relied upon so far, he could conceivably be supplanted or the organization could follow its founder to the grave.³³

There are many people who felt as Fager did but there were also those who admired Abernathy as a leader. The white press seemingly wanted to dictate what type of leader Abernathy should be if he were to be acceptable to certain elements, but Abernathy did not allow the white press to set the criteria of his leadership qualifications. He went ahead and implemented the Poor Peoples' Campaign.

Obtaining A Permit for the March

Negotiators for the campaign and the Interior Department came to an agreement on a campsite for the campaign. A federal permit limited to 3,000 persons was issued by the National Park Service. The permit was valid until June 16 but allowed for extensions at the government's discretion. The camp of shanties and tents was to be located in a large open field in West Potomac near the Lincoln Memorial Reflection Pool.

Many people were against granting the permit and had tried to block the permit. There were still very negative feelings toward the Poor Peoples' Campaign coming from the white community and press as opposed to the black community and press which remained sympathetic. A poll taken

³³"Ralph Abernathy: Out of the Shadow," Time, May 31, 1968, p. 15.

by Louis Harris of the New York Post reveals this attitude. (See Tables 1, 2, and 3). In the House of Representatives (May 7, 1968) for instance, Congressman Scott of Virginia said,

Unless specific action is taken, there is no doubt in my mind that violence will result from this March on Washington. It is not reasonable that the President should advise the people of the country as to what will and will not be permitted. The governors and mayors of our cities need to know what they can expect from Washington.

More important, Mr. Speaker, the American people are looking to the President to provide leadership at this crucial time. In my opinion, leadership means an announcement of policies now and a determination to follow up with any necessary action. It may be disastrous to wait until trouble starts before announcing a policy.³⁴

Apparently, to ease anti-March sentiment, the government let it be known that when the permit was issued, thousands of federal troops, along with many D.C. National guardsmen were alerted for possible duty, and in the event of violence, the Defense Department had already prepared a plan that it would implement. An article appeared in the New York Post, May 10, 1968,

The Pentagon reportedly has alerted 30,000 troops to be ready for possible violence when the vanguard of the Poor Peoples' Campaign begins arriving in Washington tomorrow. . . .

Some army agents reportedly are observing the progress of the Poor Peoples' Campaign to determine the size of the crowds bound for Washington, the mood of the marchers and their leaders.³⁵

³⁴U.S. Congress House, (remarks of Representative William Lloyd Scott), 90th Cong., 2nd Sess., May 7, 1968, p. 12064.

³⁵"Poor March: Army Ready for Trouble," New York Post, May 10, 1968, p. 2.

Abernathy Making Public Plans
of Poor Peoples' Campaign

Abernathy is quoted as saying before the campaign got underway in Washington that

We are going to see Congressmen and then we are going to the Department of Labor, we are going to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. We are going to the Commerce Department and we are going to talk about these problems which face us in this country. The whole question of jobs--of a guaranteed annual income and a negative income tax be raised. . . .³⁶

However, as the Campaign progressed, claims were made by the white owned media, congressmen, etc., that the Campaign had no objectives or goals.³⁷

³⁶Chester Higgins, "Will Start Campaign From Spot Where Dr. King Was Killed," Jet, May 9, 1968, p. 15.

³⁷Objectives and goals of the Poor Peoples' Campaign as presented to Congress by Senator Edward Brooke appear in the appendix.

TABLE 1

A CROSS SECTION OF FEEDINGS ABOUT THE POOR PEOPLES' MARCH
TAKEN BY LOUIS HARRIS OF THE NEW YORK POST ^a

	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure
Nationwide	34%	56%	10%
BY RACE			
White	29	61	10
Negro	80	11	9
BY AGE			
Under 35	44	45	11
35-49	31	59	10
50 and over	30	61	9
BY EDUCATION			
8th Grade or Less	34	56	10
High School	31	61	8
College	33	50	12

^a"Poll Has Whites Heavily Against Poor's March," New York Post,
June 10, 1968, p. 42.

TABLE 2
FEAR RACIAL VIOLENCE^b

	Feel Uneasy	Not Uneasy
Total Whites	54%	45%
BY SIZE OF PLACE		
Cities	71	29
Suburbs	56	44
Towns	33	67
Rural	42	58

^bIbid.

TABLE 3
RIGHT OR WRONG TO HOLD MARCH

	Total Public	White	Negro
Right To Hold March	26%	21%	77%
Wrong To Hold March	65	70	16
Not Sure	9	9	7

^cIbid.

SUMMARY

The Poor Peoples' Campaign was not allowed to die after King's assassination. A permit was granted for the Poor Peoples' Campaign after negotiations. Several stipulations complemented the granting of the permit. Troops were alerted in various parts of the country supposedly in the event the Campaign turned violent.

Reverend Ralph Abernathy had replaced Dr. King as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He was responsible for implementing the Campaign which was to take place in the nation's capital. Abernathy had been a very close associate of Dr. King. Several persons were very critical of Reverend Abernathy, while on the other hand many were pleased with him as a leader and as the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

CHAPTER V

ACTIVITIES IN WASHINGTON

Fear and Hostility

As the poor began moving into the Washington area, there was fear and hostility. Some indications of this situation are recorded in various periodicals. For instance, in an article appearing in Jet,

the administrator who should be the closest and most outstanding of the effort, anti-poverty chief Bertrand Harding, sent out memos to his staffers encouraging them to notify building police if more than ten singers appeared in corridors and also to mingle among the new arrivals in the guise of friends and report on activities of suspected militants.³⁸

Difficulties Encountered by Marchers

The marchers encountered difficulties in the campsite the first few days. The weather was cold and wet; the tents lacked heat; no showers or laundry facilities had been provided. Financial problems became apparent. Clashes between newsmen and marshals of the march took place at the camp.

The complex of frames assumed the name of Resurrection City. A snow fence was erected around the shanties. The gates were guarded by marshals. The headquarters of the Campaign was the Pitts Motor Inn, located at 1415 Belmont Street, N.W. Many of the staff of SCLC and the leaders of the Campaign stayed here. This fact, however, was to cause problems

³⁸"Ticker Tape U.S.A.," Jet, May 30, 1968, p. 12.

later on. Their stay at the Pitts Motel, meant that the on-the-scene leadership was not at the campsite.

One result of this was the continuing failure of mechanisms like the City Council which were ostensibly designed to make possible participation by the campaigners in decision making.³⁹

The following took place:

. . . A group of Commandoes activist black teenagers from Milwaukee whose leader is the militant white priest, Father James Groppi, invaded the Pitts Motel to demand that the staff vacate their expensive rooms and join them in the caking mud of West Potomac Park. . . .⁴⁰

Visitors to Resurrection City

Many visitors came to the city in the first few weeks. Stokeley Carmichael came, Senator Charles Percy (Republican from Illinois), Vice President Hubert Humphrey and Mayors John Lindsey of New York and Ivan Allen of Atlanta visited the camp.

Reactions in Washington

The reaction of officials in Washington was mixed. Many liberal northern officials remained silent, while on the other hand, many Southern Democratic lawmakers made it a point to emphasize the fear of violence in an attempt to cloud the real issues of the March--the plight of the poor and hungry in a nation of plenty. John McMillan (Chairman of House District Committee) from South Carolina is quoted in Jet as saying that the federal government ought to "request the marchers to make their wishes known and return to their respective homes before the people who committed

³⁹Fager, op. cit., p. 60.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 61.

arson in the capitol contaminate them."⁴¹ Senator McClellan of Arkansas called it a "premeditated act of contempt and rebellion against the sovereignty of government"⁴² and announced he had sworn information of a plot to turn the campaign to violence. Senator Jennings Randolph of West Virginia said that he detected "strong evidence of communist planning and participation."⁴³ Senator Russell Long of Louisiana suggested expulsion or censure of any Senator who was overly sympathetic to the demonstrators. He said in reference to the marchers, "They can just burn the whole place down and we can move the capitol to some place where they enforce the law."⁴⁴

It was reported in Jet on May 30, 1968 and other periodicals how members of Congress--seven senators and 65 representatives met with Rev. Abernathy and Andrew Young for a 90 minute briefing on the purposes of the campaign. It was decided that an informal congressional committee would be formed. Committee members were to meet with Campaign leaders to explore ways of getting legislation passed that would help the poor.

As for the attitude toward the march by the other part of the populace, an article written in the New York Post reads:

As has been with every major new thrust made by civil rights advocates in recent years, the Poor Peoples' Campaign in Washington has been overwhelmingly supported by Negroes and heavily opposed by whites.

⁴¹Ragin Lantz, "Lack of Money Halts Building of Resurrection City for Poor," Jet, May 30, 1968, p. 27.

⁴²Fager, op. cit., p. 32.

⁴³op. Cit.

⁴⁴Fager, op. cit., p. 32.

By 80 to 11 percent, Negroes backed this campaign at its outset. Whites were opposed 61 to 20 percent, even before events involving the demonstrators and law-enforcement authorities in the nation's capitol.⁴⁵

Black leadership and Black people in general were not totally unified and, therefore, had various attitudes toward the Poor Peoples' Campaign. Many shunned the Campaign, some participated, and others sympathized with the goals and objectives of the campaign but would not participate.

Representatives Charles Diggs and Senator Edward Brooke had recruited the lawmakers to meet with Rev. Ralph David Abernathy to discuss possible emergency legislation.

As far as other black organizations were concerned, many did not allot anything other than sympathy to the March. Other organizations planned to donate money but refused to march. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League were not overly supportive of the March in its initial phase. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's position is expressed in the following way by Lester McKennie:

We are here morally and spiritually. We are a poor organization, we are willing to support the Poor Peoples' Campaign with our limited funds, but we won't march with them.

We do not believe in the nonviolent approach, our movement started out nonviolently and we have been on many nonviolent demonstrations and we are tired of marching.⁴⁶

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) viewed the campaign as useless. It regards the demands for massive Federal spending as belittling and

⁴⁵Harris, op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁶"SNCC Won't March in Poor People's Drive," Washington Afro-American, May 18, 1968, p. 1.

instead suggested that the black community develop on its own. In a six page proposal CORE said, "We seek to harness the creative energy of private enterprise to achieve a solution to America's crisis."⁴⁷

SCLC officials became aware of the fact that poor Washingtonians were not overly involved in the campaign. At a June 12 meeting of support groups for Solidarity Day, Abernathy is quoted as saying:

I've found more white people than black people. . . . I don't know why we are not reaching the black people. I understand that the majority of the Washington population is black. But somewhere we are not reaching them.⁴⁸

This nonparticipation seemed ironic. Even though Washington, D.C. is the nation's capital where progress supposedly had been made (there were numerous black federal employees, a black housing official--Robert C. Weaver was in the cabinet. Thurgood Marshall was an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, the mayor was a black man; a black majority existed on the new nine man City Council and school board, and even the Corporation Council was black. One would not think it was a city of unrest, neglect, and pathetic nonfunctional governmental agencies.

In the past the poor in Washington had expressed dissatisfaction time and time again. When there were actions taken, however, the remedy was slight. So why did so few poor Washingtonians take part in the campaign?

The difference probably lies in the fact that the downtrodden in D.C. have no illusions about what Congress will do having addressed themselves with no fruitful results to that body in the past.

⁴⁷"Poor March New Experience for Americans," Pittsburgh Courier, June 1, 1969, p. 12.

⁴⁸Fager, op. cit., p. 70.

They are too familiar with the recalcitrance of the Byrds and the Broyhills to want to leave the relative security of their abodes to embark on a task which few expect immediate results.⁴⁹

Still, it must not be overlooked that many black residents are federal employees, that they had restrictions placed upon them. Congressman Robert Nix of Pennsylvania elaborates on these restrictions in the House on June 5, 1968:

. . . If the march should be directed against some particular agency of government in such a way as to constitute public criticism of the agency or its programs, federal employees, and particularly employees of that agency should not participate. This is especially advisable if the employee occupies a position in which his official duties require him to recommend or directly support for policies or operations being criticized.⁵⁰

Additional Reasons For A Poor Peoples' Campaign

There were many reasons given for enacting a Poor Peoples' Campaign. Abernathy suggested that if the Campaign did not succeed, riots and violence would become the order of the day. James Bevel (Director of Nonviolent Action for SCLC) suggested other reasons:

Now you can sit here and play jive if you want to like you don't know what the hell's going on. But I said that if the whites (community) becomes sufficiently fearful, in order to relieve its anxiety it will kill black folks off without any thought about it. . . .

.
That's why we have to have a Poor Peoples' Campaign to redirect the minds and the attention of the American people into economics. Our scheme is to take a section of all the communities, black and white and say, no, no, the issue is

⁴⁹"We Have Poor People Too," Washington Afro-American, May 25, 1968, p. 4.

⁵⁰U. S., Congress, House of Representatives(Robert C. Nix), 90th Cong., 2nd Sess., June 5, 1968, p. 16113.

a new economic order.⁵¹

An attack on Bevel's controversial speeches was forthcoming. In the House of Representatives on June 4, 1968, John M. Ashbrook launched an attack on Bevel:

Mr. Ashbrook, Mr. Speaker, it would be absurd to think that the poor camped in Resurrection City, so called, think of the American flag as a "rag on a stick," or would eliminate the God versus devil philosophy of Judeo-Christian tradition," or further reorient the police presumably away from law enforcement even further or believe that all public officials, liberal or conservative, are fascists.

To believe this would be absurd. But to attribute these beliefs to a leader of the Poor Peoples' Campaign would not be too far after. Unfortunately, by following such men as the irreverent James Bevel, the poor are lending the weight of their names and numbers to statements such as these. For these were part of Bevel's statements of the campaign's aims.⁵²

The position of many white people is surmised in an article which appeared in the New York Post.

Lingering in the back of many white people's mind was the fear that the encampment to dramatize demands for economic programs for the poor would erupt in violence, despite the pledges of the campaign leaders that they would adhere to the nonviolent principles of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. A substantial 54 percent of all whites in the country said they felt uneasy over the possibilities of racial violence.⁵³

The Continuation of Negative Media Coverage

The content of press articles of white controlled periodicals continued to be negative. Many articles continued to pass judgment and

⁵¹Fager, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

⁵²U.S., Congress, House, (remarks of Representative John Ashbrook), 90th Cong., 2nd Sess., June 4, 1968, p. 16028.

⁵³Harris, op. cit., p. 42.

project opinions about the Poor Peoples' Campaign. An example of this kind of thing is shown in the following article:

They went ahead and did it anyway in spite of the obvious fact that it was the wrong time, the wrong place. They were like some stuffed anthropological exhibit in a museum or zoo and the tourists, nervous at first, came through with their cameras in hand to look and to sniff. The poor couldn't be missed. . . . ⁵⁴

Some reporters contend that the marshals used excessive force on them.

Most seemed to enjoy their new authority and many used it to express hostility for sightseers in general, whites in particular, and newsmen especially--all of whom clustered around this newest public attraction. Encounters like those of the first morning between guards and reporters became constant occurrences, but now with the snow fence up, the marshals were able to keep reporters well away from their subjects.⁵⁵

Headlines such as "Oppressed are Oppressing" appeared in the Evening Star.

The young marshals, some of whom probably have shouted themselves hoarse over police brutality were pushing people around in the style to which they have become accustomed. Their orders were numerous and arbitrary. They shouted "make way," joined hands, shoved organizers, sympathizers, and curious indiscriminately, intervened swiftly in any dialogue between poor and press.⁵⁶

What The Campaigners Wanted And What They Got

The campaigners evidently wanted an open dialogue with government officials. When they marched to Capitol Hill to see Wilbur Mills (head of the House Ways and Means Committee), they were unable to see him. Instead, the marchers were arrested. The campaigners felt the need to

⁵⁴John Neary, "And So The Poor Came," Life, June 28, 1968, pp. 28-29.

⁵⁵Fager, op. cit., p. 37.

⁵⁶Ibid.

express dissatisfaction with the amendment limiting eligibility for the aid for Dependent Children program. Mills' response was "I don't convene the Committee on anyone's demands, not even the President's."⁵⁷

Mills was a focal victim of the Poor Peoples' Campaign. Wanted posters were put out with Mills' description and the crimes he was accused of committing. The House Ways and Means Committee is a powerful committee controlling the finances of government. Mills is described in a National Welfare Rights Organization pamphlet in the following way:

Mills has relentlessly fought against government programs for the poor and the rights of Negroes and other minorities, and for the interests of the rich, conservative and racist powers in America. Last year he singled out some of the poorest of America's poor as his latest victims and personally railroaded through Congress the Anti-Welfare Law of 1967.⁵⁸

This law was intended to freeze federal funding to aid dependent children programs. This law will also force in many cases welfare recipients to work; also a product of this legislation will be the additive investigation into a recipient's private life and issuance of stamps and vouchers instead of money.

During the stay in Washington, a group of approximately 500 demonstrators from Resurrection City went into the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. They did not leave until they saw HEW Secretary Wilbur Cohen whereupon they expressed certain demands.

⁵⁷"Plague After Plague," Time , May 31, 1968, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁸"Now Wanted for Conspiracy to Starve Children, Destroy Families, Force Women into Slavery and Exploit Poor People," Official Publication of the National Welfare Rights Organization, 1968, no pagination in pamphlet.

Another group marched on the Supreme Court on May 29. They were protesting a decision upholding 24 Indians violating fishing regulations in the state of Washington. This march was led by George Crow Flies High, an Indian chief from North Dakota. This march ended in a disturbance. The leaders of this march accused the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) of being responsible for the disturbance.

Another group marched into the Department of Agriculture and ordered food. The tab came to almost three hundred dollars. Rev. Jackson who led this march is quoted in Times magazine as having said,

We're going to balance it off against what the Agriculture Department owes us for all the lunch programs that we did not get.⁵⁹

Department of Agriculture Protest

Somewhere around June 20, 1968, a group of about eighty demonstrators marched from Resurrection City to the Agriculture Department. Again they requested to see Agriculture Secretary, Orville Freeman. Freeman's aide said that the Secretary would be glad to meet with no more than 12 persons provided they arranged an appointment at a later date. Some of the marchers, apparently repulsed by this response, took up various positions in the building's doorway and refused to move, and as a result they were arrested. Another group of marchers arrived, joined with those who had not been arrested, and proceeded to block traffic around 12th Street.

⁵⁹"Ralph Abernathy: Out of the Shadow," Time, May 31, 1968, p. 28.

These marchers were reinforced by other marchers. The number of marchers participating in this protest is recorded in the Congressional Records sources to have been as high as 500 people. This was apparently the beginning of the kind of civil disobedience promised by ranking SCLC officials earlier.

If this was the kind of civil disobedience SCLC officials intended to occur in Washington, then the statements reportedly that Frank Reeves (one of Rev. Abernathy's legal advisors) made to the protesters were out of order. According to one article appearing in the Washington Post, Reeves was seen arguing with one group and told them, "What you are doing is not SCLC policy. I know what the policy is. I get it from Abernathy."⁶⁰ Later that same night, a clash is reported to have occurred between policemen and protesters as they returned to Resurrection City from the Department of Agriculture where approximately 77 people had been arrested. It was reported in the Washington Post that ". . . the youths, who by then numbered about 250, began hurling bottles, rocks, and sticks of the baton type carried by Resurrection City Marshals at 150 policemen. . . ."⁶¹ The combined force of Metropolitan and Park Police hurled tear gas into the crowd.

This disorder continued into the late hours of the night. Reports reveal that an agreement was reached between the police and Resurrection City Marshals to restore order. The marshals agreed to have the protesters

⁶⁰U.S., Congress, Senate, (remarks of Senator Strom Thurmond), 90th Cong., 2nd Sess., June 21, 1968, p. 18182.

⁶¹Ibid.

to go back inside of Resurrection City. The marshals then linked arms and forced most of the demonstrators back into Resurrection City. The policemen still remained near Resurrection City with their riot paraphernalia still intact and ready for use.

Rev. Abernathy is reported to have payed the bill totaling \$292.66 to the Department of Agriculture. Jesse Jackson, leader of this demonstration, was reportedly replaced by Hosea Williams as Manager of Resurrection City. However, neither of these claims have been found to be true. There is no record of this replacement. In the interview with Abernathy, he stated no replacement took place.

Inside Resurrection City

The Congressional Record contains speeches by congressmen and selected newspaper articles that suggest that violence was very prevalent in and around Resurrection City. Senator Thurmond addressed the Congress on June 24, 1968:

Mr. President, the city of Washington is once again being threatened by a wave of violence and mobs.

The Washington police force and the National Capital Park Police have been denied the right to police an area within their own jurisdiction. Information from a high source of the District of Columbia government reveals that the Justice Department entered into an agreement with leaders of the Poor Peoples' Campaign that they alone would have policing powers within Resurrection City. . . . ⁶²

Several flareups between police and Resurrection City residents and numerous assaults within the City were reported. An article appearing in the Washington Post on June 20, 1968, went as follows:

⁶²Ibid.

... one blood-covered victim was taken by ambulance from the city last night at 9:30 p.m. He was still being treated at Freedman's Hospital early today for a cut throat and convulsions. He refused to discuss the incident with the police or give his name.

A second blood-splattered man, identified as a campaign marshal was taken from the city by ambulance at 11 p.m. after he was hit over the head with a plank of wood by another marshal, according to a third marshal.

Police could offer no further information on the assault because they said they are not permitted inside the city, and marshals could give no information.⁶³

The Washington Post reportedly interviewed Alvin Jackson, a resident of Resurrection City. There, Mr. Jackson was supposedly the Chief Security Marshal. He is recorded to have said,

The reason the population of this city is going down is not mud, poor food, rain or lousy homes. . . . The reason they leave is that men are getting tired of coming home from a days picketing to find their belongings stolen or their wife raped. . . .

There are rape, robbery and cuttings everyday and there is nothing we can do about it even when we catch the guys who did it. . . . There are about 20 guns in Resurrection City. There are lead pipes, knives and molotov cocktails in there.⁶⁴

Also, indications in the news media suggest that people were lured into Resurrection City where they were taken advantage of in various ways. An article, entitled "Four Young Wheaton Men Beaten at Resurrection--I Could See One Hell of a Swing," appeared in the Washington, D.C. Daily News on June 24, 1968. It reported that four white students had been robbed and abused by the residents of Resurrection City so badly that medical attention was required.

⁶³Ibid., p. 18183.

⁶⁴Ibid.

Ralph Abernathy responded to the question of violence in an interview by saying,

We were city dwellers like any other city, so we had violence like any other city has violence. We had a problem with alcohol, a problem with dope and people would get angry and start fighting among themselves. Our city was not a utopia. . . . Fortunately we didn't have any murders at all within our city.⁶⁵

The Involvement of Other Ethnic Groups
In the Poor Peoples' Campaign

Supposedly there was friction between Mexican Americans and SCLC officials. Charles Fager surmises it in this following way:

A further drain on the leaderships time were the interethnic squabbles, primarily between the Mexican Americans and SCLC, which began as soon as the Southwestern caravan arrived in Washington May 23. The most vociferous among these later arrivals was New Mexico's Reves Lopez Tijerina.⁶⁶

At this time Tijerina was head of a group he called the Political Confederation of Free City States (PCFCS) in the southwest. This group was not the epitome of nonviolence. PCFCS doctrine is based on an interpretation of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in which Mexico added a great portion of the Southwest to the United States. The contention is made by Tijerina and his followers that the treaty provided for the preservation of native language and culture; that the federal government had violated the treaty and taken away the land.

"Tijerina's most frequent complaint was that the SCLC leadership did not take the need and opinions of non-black groups sufficiently into account in making decisions.⁶⁷ However Fager reports that on

⁶⁵Interview with Ralph Abernathy, March 25, 1975.

⁶⁶Fager, op. cit., p. 53.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 56.

several occasions Abernathy marched with Mexican Americans and Indians to places such as the Supreme Court.

Throughout the Campaign, it is claimed by various periodicals that all ethnic groups (excepting Mexican Americans) who participated in the campaign resided at the campsite. The Mexican Americans supposedly lived at the Hawthorne School between 5th and I Streets, S.W.

Indian Participation Not Endorsed By The
National Congress of American Indians

Indians who participated in the Poor Peoples' Campaign were small in number, probably because the influential National Congress of American Indians did not support the Poor Peoples' Campaign.

It should be noted that the National Congress of American Indians, one of the most outstanding organizations, interested in the affairs of Indians, has voiced its opposition to the poor march in Washington and has courageously pointed out that without definite realistic and achievable goals there can be little hope of success. The NCAI had wisely called for a restatement of the long range collective goals of the Indians, presented in an orderly and proper way to the various branches of government.⁶⁸

The Washington Afro-American newspaper reported, in response to alleged conflict of interests (between certain participating racial groups) by the press, the following:

One of the leaders of the Indian Contingent stated there was not any disharmony between the Indians and Colored. The Indian said he wanted to make it clear that the aims of the poor people were basically the same. The colored, the Indian, and the Mexican-American must work together against the forces that keep them oppressed.

⁶⁸U.S., Congress, Senate, (remarks of Senator Paul J. Fanin)
90th Cong., 2nd Sess., June 10, 1968, p. 16508.

The Indian said the problem was a matter of communication and education between the groups, and that they have put off for too long the work to throw off their oppressors.⁶⁹

Solidarity Day

The highlight of the Poor Peoples' Campaign was Solidarity Day, rescheduled from May 30 to June 19, the anniversary of the freeing of slaves in Texas in 1865. According to various periodicals, Bayard Rustin was asked by Rev. Ralph Abernathy to handle the March. Rustin had been the master organizer of the March on Washington in 1963. The success of the Solidarity Day was considered important because it was felt the support of people around the country would be needed when the campaign began to place emphasis on economic action.

Rustin "saw change as possible and desirable almost exclusively through a Negro liberal-labor coalition within the Democratic Party and had been an unremitting opponent of Black Power."⁷⁰ Earlier, when talks of the march first began, Rustin had been critical of the Campaign. In fact, since King had moved somewhat to the left before his death and Rustin had remained on the right, the distance had been increased between them. Many people within SCLC were opposed to Rustin's appointment. It was felt by those who supported his appointment that he could attract the white liberal segment. After Rustin's appointment,

The delaying of Solidarity Day produced another very important tactical decision. Mass arrests were to be put off until after the big march because the inevitable disruption and probable violence accompanying them would scare off many liberals who

⁶⁹"Poor To Stay Til Demands Are Met," Washington Afro-American, June 15, 1968, p. 13.

⁷⁰Fager, op. cit., p. 49.

preferred their demonstrations to be peaceful and picnic like.⁷¹

On June 2, Rustin issued a revised list of reformist campaign demands: one million federally financed jobs, passage of a pending housing bill, repeal of Wilbur Mills welfare amendments, extension of labor laws to farm workers, restoration of budget cuts in various poverty programs, and a presidential declaration of national emergency which would make possible administrative action to beef up social programs. Also, included in these demands were an economic bill of rights that would guarantee all citizens a job or an income. The response to this was the following:

The list was hailed by editors and liberal politicians as an important refinement of the campaign's sweeping rhetoric into concrete, attainable objectives that could be fitted into conventional political bargaining processes.⁷²

However, many SCLC officials were not pleased with the revised list of demands. Fager quoted Hosea Williams as saying,

This was a bunch of jazz and foolishness. Bayard Rustin was given the job of doing some public relations work for the big day on the 19th and nothing else. The policy statement is completely out of order . . . we do not accept it and I'm sure the Steering Committee will not accept it.⁷³

Abernathy was also unhappy with this policy statement. He felt the policy statement had not fully expressed the demands of the Poor Peoples' Campaign. Abernathy is quoted as saying,

I do not think it is comprehensive enough to cover the demands of the Poor Peoples' Campaign. I go along with some of his ideas but I think its got to be much broader.⁷⁴

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

Fager described Abernathy's rejection of Rustin's statement in the following way,

When pressed as what more it should include, he mentioned only a condemnation of the war in Vietnam, but later added that another significant omission was the lack of any mention of land claims or fishing rights, the specific demands of the Mexican-American and Indian participants. Relations between the ethnic groups were sensitive just then, and men like Tijerina could be expected to react sharply to policy statements which neglected their concerns.⁷⁵

On June 6, Bayard Rustin announced that he was suspending his work for organizing Solidarity Day and giving Rev. Abernathy twenty-four hours to clarify his role or accept his resignation. The twenty-four hour deadline passed. At a press conference Abernathy made it public that he had accepted Rustin's resignation.

The newspapers were highly critical of this move by SCLC officials. The headlines were endless. On June 8, an editorial appeared in the Evening Star--"Confused Goals," in the Washington Post on June 9--"Poor Camp: A City Adrift," on June 10 in the New York Times--"Campaign in Trouble," in the Post on June 12, "Confusion Obscures Poor Peoples' Specific Demands," etc. Obviously, these papers set out to develop the idea that the Campaign had no goals and objectives.

. . . the press attitude at all levels, which had been shifting from cautious support, through confusion into ambivalence was setting firmly into a consistent and critical, almost cynical stance. Once established, such a mood is very difficult to dislodge, either from the newsmen who have it or their readers and listeners who usually accept it. By the end of the next week, the campaign had clearly lost the sympathy of an essential ally, and was thereafter on the defensive.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

Many other people felt that Rustin's resignation would thwart white support. Nevertheless, Sterling Tucker (then Executive Director of Urban League) replaced Rustin.

The peak of the Poor Peoples' Campaign was Solidarity Day which many well known persons attended. Whitney Young surmised this event by saying:

This may be the last march which is nonviolent and which brings blacks and whites together. The nation and the Congress must listen to us now and before it is too late. . . . 77

Some of the people who attended Solidarity Day were Mrs. Coretta Scott King, Miss Dorothy Height (President of the National Council of Negro Women), Cleveland Robinson (Negro American Labor Council), Edward Brooke (senator from Massachusetts), Roy Wilkins (Executive Director, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), and Whitney Young, Jr. (Executive Director of National Urban League). A reproduction of the Solidarity Day programme appears in the appendix.

Senator Claiborne Pell contributed the following to the Congressional Record:

The Solidarity Day March

Mr. Pell. Mr. President, I wish to comment on the most successful and in my mind, gratifying Solidarity Day march recently conducted by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Washington.

The speakers, from the platform in varying ways, all attempted to demonstrate the dire need, not only for food but also for education and jobs presently being experienced not only by blacks but also Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans and the American Indians who were among my forebears. The Rev. Ralph Abernathy spoke bluntly of those needs, succinctly set forth his position and spoke for the majority of the assembled mass. Underlying the whole speaking program was the edifying feeling that our nation must move, must take notice of the needs, must take action to alleviate conditions which should never have been allowed to develop in the first place.

77 "Solidarity and Disarray," Time, June 28, 1968, p. 16.

Dr. Abernathy also brought up another question, Mr. President, and that is the future of demonstration. I understand that the permit for Resurrection City expires this Sunday. I would hope that the Department of Interior would see fit to extend that permit. One would ask why grant such an extension? Affluent segments of our society are represented in Washington by lobbyists who can afford comfortable offices, high priced lawyers, and always seem able to secure access to those in powerful positions in our government. However, the people who marched on Wednesday do not have the wherewithal to launch a high-priced lobbying organization. Their efforts must be personal; and instead of an office they have constructed a little city. I wonder ~~what~~ harm is being done by the presence of Resurrection City. Do not these citizens have the right to petition their government in a peaceful and orderly manner and would not the continuing existence of the city reinforce in the collective minds of both the executive and congressional branches of government the real needs and perhaps the actual priorities we should be studying today. . . .⁷⁸

Expiration of Permit

The permit for the march, extended once, expired again and the demonstrators were given an ultimatum to vacate the premises. The order came to clear out the camp.

A newspaper article submitted to the Congressional Records by Senator Byrd of West Virginia implies that SCLC officials had other plans:

Setting the stage for a confrontation with the federal government, the Rev. Abernathy restated his vow yesterday to keep his followers in Resurrection City, beyond tonight's camp permit deadline.

Although some high-level government officials say no decision has been reached on a Park Service permit extension request and one source said, "It is still under consideration," it has been indicated that no extension will be forthcoming. Expiration time of the permit is 8 P.M.

As if to visibly support Abernathy's claim that Resurrection City will not be evacuated, workmen during the day were busy

⁷⁸U.S., Congress, Senate, (remarks of Senator Claiborne Pell), 90th Cong., 2nd Sess., June 21, 1968, p. 18198.

unloading lumber and prefabricated sections of flooring for the construction of a permanent dining hall and extension of the "city hall."

Telephone workmen also installed new lines to Abernathy's shack inside the tent city.⁷⁹

On the morning of June 25, an army of almost 2,000 policemen surrounded Resurrection City. Tension was extremely high. At a press conference that morning, Abernathy revealed his next move.⁸⁰ Apparently, rather than risk an all-out confrontation, he would march the occupants to the Department of Agriculture and Capitol to protest and submit to arrest if necessary.

The group that Abernathy led were unable to see Secretary Freeman of the Department of Agriculture. They then proceeded to the edge of the Capitol grounds. The Capitol police Chief (John Powell) refused to allow the group onto Capitol grounds. Abernathy responded saying,

Will you please let us through? People are dying of starvation.

This is our Capitol. . . . We pay our taxes, we maintain it, we keep it up. These are our Senators and our Congressmen. What have you got against this group? Why are you discriminating? Because we are poor? All we ask is the right to go on this ground. I beg you not to deny us that right . . . just far enough to get the whole group on the steps.⁸¹

The marchers were not allowed to pass. Abernathy told the group to sit down. At that point Chief Powell said, "It has become necessary that we make arrests. We do not want to. . . . I ask that you remain calm."⁸²

⁷⁹U.S., Congress, Senate, (remarks of Senator Robert C. Byrd), p. 18376. 90th Cong., 2nd Sess., June 24, 1968).

⁸⁰The full dialogue of Abernathy at this press conference can be found in the appendix.

⁸¹Fager, op. cit., p. 116.

⁸²Ibid.

The demonstrators were charged with unlawful assembly. Abernathy, along with other marchers, was given a 20 day jail sentence. When it came time to enact this plan, there were some who refused to leave the camp, but these persons were outnumbered by the police and immediately subdued.

Reports of congressmen estimate that over 1,500 policemen surrounded Resurrection City that same morning. Remaining in the camp were approximately 110 people. A policeman is reported to have told the group over a bullhorn when things reached a climax,

The permit on this property has expired. You must leave here within the next 56 minutes to avoid arrest and prosecution. For those of you who have no other means of transportation, service to your homes will be provided at no cost by the Travelers Aid Society. Shuttle buses are now available at the west side of the Reflecting Pool.⁸³

Some people reportedly accepted. The others remained in the camp while Hosea Williams led them in freedom songs. The police began to invade the camp. The scene is described by Fager in the following way,

The police wore riot helmets, flak jackets and knee high rubber boots, and were armed with shotguns, two types of tear gas grenades, pistols and billy clubs. They banged on the shanties with gun butts calling for anyone inside to come out, then searched the empty shacks. They found no people and no weapons, though one or two shacks with boards nailed over the exits were booby trapped and caught fire when the officers forced them open, and in another a tear gas went off. The campaigners waiting at the camp's center went to the jail buses singing peacefully.⁸⁴

When the day had ended, the people who followed Abernathy to the Capitol were arrested along with him; the people who remained at the camp were arrested. Many people in the Washington area were disturbed by the

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

eviction and congregated at the SCLC headquarters in protest. They were dispersed with tear gas. Tanks were brought into the area.

From his jail call Abernathy appealed to people to come to Washington to demonstrate and to fill the jail cells.

On Tuesday no one showed up, but SCLC made do by parading its mule train through the downtown section of the city and predicting the Philadelphians would arrive Wednesday. On Wednesday 35 persons followed Jesse Jackson onto the Capitol grounds but scrupulously obeyed police instructions to break up into three groups, thus avoiding arrests. Thursday about 60 persons from Washington gathered at the campaigns "action center" for a march; but it was called off, perhaps because of the small turnout and perhaps because Rev. Abernathy was holding a press conference at the D.C. jail that afternoon.

The next arrest demonstration came on Friday, June 28. Four hundred quiet, neatly dressed Quackers drove to Washington from their general conference in Cape May, New Jersey to demonstrate support for the campaign.

The arrests total for Friday was 78 persons. It was the largest single number of arrests after the closing of Resurrection City. The 35 Quackers were the only group from outside Washington which actually came to court arrest. On only two other occasions after the Resurrection City closing did the campaign provoke arrests: On the 4th of July, 24 were arrested near the Capitol trying to stage a watermelon "eat-in;" on the 9th of July 18 were arrested again on the capitol grounds.⁸⁵

Hosea Williams posted bond at the D.C. General Sessions Court a few hours after being arrested. After being released from jail, Rev. Ralph Abernathy reportedly gave instructions along with future plans.

. . . he directed all out-of-town marchers still in the capitol "to return to their homes and join in the local leadership and activities for poor people while awaiting definite assignments from me concerning the campaign on a national level." He announced plans to visit both national party conventions with a small group of demonstrators as a delegation from the 51st. state of hunger.⁸⁶

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

Funds

The cost to implement the Poor Peoples' Campaign is uncertain because there are no available financial records. However, it can be suggested from certain indicators that the Campaign did cost thousands of dollars. In an article appearing in the New York Times on May 13, 1968, it was surmised that the antipoverty drive would cost at least \$1 million in cash and materials. At that time the Campaign was implemented, SCLC had not achieved its financial goal. The money being donated to a Martin Luther King Memorial fund was not to be utilized in the Washington effort. According to an article in the newspapers, Mr. William Rutherford (SCLC) director cited various items that would cost money, such as medical equipment, shower heads, sewage systems, electrical wiring, telephone lines, air mattresses, sleeping bags, etc. Mr. Rutherford put the cost of meals at \$1.30 a day.

Many of these figures were calculated on the idea that 4,000 people would be participating in the March.

According to a May 13, 1968 New York Times article, \$300,000 had been raised for the anti-poverty program. However, this money went quickly.

Transportation is the major financial problem, Mr. Rutherford said. He pointed out, for example, that it would cost the organization \$3,900 to transport 50 persons from Los Angeles to Washington by bus.

An advance contingent that arrived in Washington today to erect housing for the antipoverty demonstration traveled from Marks, Mississippi on 10 Greyhound buses that cost the conference \$11,703.⁸⁷

⁸⁷Walter Rugaber, "Cost of Poor People's March Is Put At \$1 Million," New York Times, May 13, 1968, p. 36.

Donations to the Campaign, recorded in various periodicals, was to have been as high as \$25,000 and as low as .37 cents.

There have been donations "in kind" from more well-known sources. For instance, Mr. Rutherford said, "Mobile telephones have been installed free in vehicles on many sections of the march by American Telephone and Telegraph Company."⁸⁸

An article appearing in the New York Post on May 18, 1968, reads:

We are in a financial crisis at this time, said the Rev. Bernard Lafayette, national coordinator of the campaign who said \$3,000,000 was needed to pull us out of the hole.⁸⁹

This very same article set out to show contradictions over the amount the plywood construction would cost: (1) refuted the 1 million dollar figure quoted by William Rutherford (SCLC director); (2) quoted John Wiebenson (Maryland University professor) as saying the tents could be erected at \$80.00 each or \$48,000 total. Wilbenson had helped in designing the A frame; (3) said Lafayette refused to give a breakdown of the \$3,000,000 other than it was for hardware, construction, tools, and other facilities; (4) quoted Lafayette's assistant, deputy coordinator, Anthony Henry, as saying the financial needs of the anti-poverty drive were only \$200,000. Also quoted was Albert Gollin, a camp construction official, as saying the maximum cost would not go above \$500,000; and (5) quoted Rev. Abernathy as saying he was not aware of the extent of the financial crisis but planned to address himself to it.

There were also contributions given by such notables as Nobel Laureates who resided in the United States, entertainers such as Bill Crosby, Harry Belafonte, the Herb Alpert Tijuana Brass, Barbara Streisand and others. Sammy Davis reportedly gave a check totaling \$17,800. Sidney

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Robert Terrell, "Poor Crusade Facing Crisis Over Money," New York Post, May 18, 1968, p. 2.

Poitier is also reported to have contributed liberally.

A fund raising rally for SCLC after the closing of Resurrection City was held at the Hollywood Bowl. Around 18,000 people attended and approximately \$142,000 was raised. Some of the performers at this rally were the following: Bill Crosby, Harry Belafonte, Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass and Barbara Streisand. Reverend Abernathy, released from jail in Washington, D.C. after having served 20 days for unlawful assembly on Capitol grounds, attended this rally. Here he reportedly said that "he will lead a delegation of 25 or 30 persons disciplined in nonviolence, and will attempt to address platform committees of both national political conventions as well as the conventions themselves. . . . We will not be there as a disruptive force, but as spokesmen for the 51st state representing hunger."⁹⁰

Howard University Contributions

Howard University had been recorded as supporting the objectives and goals of the Poor Peoples' Campaign. None of this support involved the use of appropriated funds. Many of the students and faculty were involved on a voluntary basis. The university food service made available their kitchen facilities and cooking utensils for the preparation of one meal a day. SCLC supplied the labor and food.

. . . Money for the operation came largely from a half dozen large food chains in this area, from church groups and the Washington Hotel Association. It was funneled through the Health and Welfare Council. . . .

In addition to money, large quantities of food were donated by area dairy and bakery firms, and by several national

⁹⁰"Fund Raising Rally Gets \$142,000 For Poor," Jet, August 1, 1968, p. 56.

manufacturers notably Heinz Products. Surplus products from the Agriculture Department also were used.⁹¹

Howard's College of Medicine, along with Freedman's Hospital, set up a clinic to handle medical disorders. Emergency dental service was provided by the College of Dentistry. The School of Engineering and Architecture helped in designing and erecting the prefabricated housing. Students and faculty from the School of Social Work served on committees set up by SCLC to handle housing, transportation, and workshops to inform the general public of the purposes of the Campaign. Howard's students established an emergency distribution point at the Student Center on campus; clothing, blankets and other essentials were collected. The Department of Home Economics initiated a day care center for school age children.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE POOR PEOPLES' CAMPAIGN

The Poor Peoples' Campaign aimed to do several things. According to M. Darrol Bryant, author of To Whom It May Concern,

The aim of the Poor Peoples' Campaign is to raise the level of visibility of the problems of poverty in the country. The aim is so straightforward that some think the Southern Christian Leadership Conference went to a lot of effort for nothing. Why is there such resistance to the whole campaign. Simply this: Poverty is an ugly reality. . . . Most Americans do not like what they see when poverty is raised to a level of visibility. America the beautiful is sailed by the presence of the poor. Why, America has always had poor people. Yes, that is true. But never before has America had the resources to banish hunger from its midst. That is why the poor have come to our nation's capital.⁹²

No one definition has been able to fully define poverty. But there is one thing that cannot be overlooked when describing the poor and

⁹¹Senator Robert C. Byrd remarks, op. cit., p. 78376.

⁹²Bryant, op. cit., p. 3.

non-poor and that is the vast difference in income levels. In number of dollars the income level may vary from one place to another, but the fact still remains that the poor will have a lower income level than the nonpoor. Many times the poor have no income at all. A low income level has limited purchasing power in a capitalistic economic system. In many cases, the bare necessities cannot be secured.

Traditionally a line of poverty is drawn to separate the poor from the non-poor. The line is drawn at a specific dollar income level reflecting a judgement as to the minimum needs below which an individual cannot subsist or does not live adequately or live in 'deprivation.' The line is drawn at different people and reflect differing concepts of justice, of needs, of values and of the influence of geography and occupation.⁹³

In the United States there is enough food to feed the hungry, enough wealth so that everyone can at least be provided with the bare necessities. A major problem that seems to keep this from happening is that there is no equal distribution of resources and wealth. Individual gain and private enterprise are selfishly abused in so many cases but continue to go unchecked. The wealth remains in the hands of a few who mete it out as they see fit. Most of the time various racial and cultural minorities are severely victimized by this unequal distribution.

The communities of the poor generally have the poorest school, the scarcest opportunities for training. The poor citizen lacks organization, endures sometimes arbitrary impingement on his rights by courts and law enforcement agencies; cannot make his protest or has stopped protesting, a spirit of defeatism often pervades his life and remains the only legacy for his children.⁹⁴

⁹³Oscar Onnati, "Poverty in America," Poverty in America, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968, pp. 24-25.

⁹⁴"The War on Poverty" (A Congressional Presentation, March 17, 1964, prepared under the direction of Sargent Shriver, Special Assistant to the President), Poverty in America, eds. Louis A. Ferman, Joyce L. Komblush, and Alan Haber), p. 315.

Whatever the ulterior motives were for staging the Poor Peoples' Campaign, there is no denying that

The Poor Peoples' Campaign has exposed a contradiction in American life. The contradiction in simplest terms is this: Millions live in poverty in the midst of the most affluent country in the world. This contradiction has remained hidden from most Americans. To those who live in poverty, it is a daily, painful, destructive reality. Given a gross national product of over eight hundred billions of dollars, this contradiction is morally outrageous and unacceptable.⁹⁵

This one of the Campaign of 1968 has ended. In 1969 various campaigns were staged in communities throughout the United States. The 1970 Campaign began in Charleston, South Carolina. Emphasis of the Campaign was placed on organizing the poor at the local, state and national levels. The Poor Peoples' Campaign of 1972 was an outgrowth of these various campaigns and its aim was to stress to the political parties that it did not have the votes of the poor tied up, Certainly if it did not intend to constructively alleviate the ills of American Society and make it a better place to live for the poor, hungry, oppressed and unemployed. The Poor People's Campaign continues and is an ongoing movement for the dispossessed and the excluded in American life.

From 1968 through 1975 there has been only slight quantitative and qualitative change.

There remains an unseen America, a land of unlimited opportunity and restricted choice. In it live nearly 10 million families who try to find shelter, feed and clothe their children, stave off disease and malnutrition, and somehow build a better life on less than \$60 a week. Almost two-thirds of these families struggle to get along on less than \$40 a week....Being poor is not a choice for these millions; it is a rigid way of life. It is handed down from generation to generation in a cycle of inadequate homes, inadequate jobs and stunted ambitions.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Bryant, op. cit., p. 4.

⁹⁶"The War on Poverty" (A Congressional Presentation, March 17, 1964, Prepared under the direction of Sargent Shriver, Special Assistant to the President), Poverty in America, eds. Louis A. Fernan, Joyce L. Kombluh, and Alan Haber), p. 315.

Still today many people go without food to eat, the proper kinds of clothes to wear, the proper education and even suitable employment. And if this is not enough, the human and civil rights and privileges of these minorities are many times abused, overlooked and even denied them. Those with a sizable amount of money are hardly ever subjected to this kind of discrimination and abuse.

SUMMARY

The Poor Peoples' Campaign was enacted amid many difficulties--bad weather, no shower or laundry facilities, financial problems, negative press coverage, etc. In Washington the campaigners attempted to carry on dialogue with several pertinent agencies of the federal government. The Department of Agriculture was one such agency that received the most attention from the campaigners. Hunger was a primary issue. It is this agency that may very well be held accountable as to whether people in America are fed or not.

Other groups of campaigners such as the Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and poor whites sought out agencies they found were answerable to them such as the Supreme Court, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Bureau of Indian Affairs, etc.

The highlight of the Poor Peoples' Campaign was Solidarity Day. Many supporters not already in Washington went there to physically show their support. In fact several thousand people attended.

The Poor Peoples' Campaign permit expired soon after Solidarity Day. An order came to clear the camp. Many of the campaigners who stayed on were jailed and the campsite destroyed.

CONCLUSION

The tone of Dr. King had become somewhat militant right before his assassination. There is really no definite way of telling what caused Dr. King's attitude to change some things to consider that took place in the last years of his life.

The Poor Peoples' Campaign was doomed from the beginning by one of the most influential elements in society--the media. The White controlled sector of the media was seemingly the most critical; the black media remained observant and sympathetic throughout the Campaign.

At this time it is hard to tell whether the attitudes of fear and hostility were a product of media coverage or whether the media coverage was the product of fear and hostility.

However, one thing became clear--certain elements did not want the Campaign to take place. Reasons for this reaction ranges from those who felt that violence would be a result of the March to the fact that the March would be an embarrassment to the United States. Even after the Campaign had begun, many elements worked day and night to destroy its credibility. They were not satisfied until the permit for the Campaign had expired, could not be renewed, and the protesters jailed and disbanded.

Throughout all of this, the majority of black people and other poor and oppressed people remained sympathetic to this Campaign.

Throughout the Campaign, the Department of Agriculture demonstration was the most symbolic. It dramatized the plight of poor people and it also exposed the contradiction in this supposedly representative agency of government which is seemingly unconcerned that millions of people go

hungry in the United States.

The 1968 Campaign involved a multiracial group of people going to Washington to carry on dialogue with various agencies of the government and to bring attention to the fact that there are people who are poor and hungry in America.

The Poor Peoples' Campaign was confronted with a number of obstacles. The inclement weather was not very conducive. And to make matters worse, a considerable portion of press coverage was negative. Segments of the media emphasized many unpleasant things about the Campaign and attributed many things which so far have been unfounded. Accusations and highlights of this unfavorable news coverage pertained to assaults on whites, rapes, vague demands, and misbehavior.

The Poor Peoples' Campaign was significant for several reasons: It was the first time that any type of movement had been able to bring such a large ethnic mixture together. This ethnic mixture included blacks, American Indians, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and poor whites. Even though there may have been different interests among the various groups which took precedence, this group was in agreement that they were the victims of poverty, hunger, and oppression. This campaign exposed poverty and hunger in the wealthiest country to its people and to the world. Finally, this Campaign was significant in getting a few agencies to do their job even though the effect of this was slight.

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DIRECTOR**

**REGIONAL
DIRECTOR**

**INTERNATIONAL
WORLD
AFFAIRS
DIVISION**

**INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN
AFFAIRS
DIVISION**

**STUDENT/
YOUTH
AFFAIRS
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**CHAPTERS/
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LEGAL AFFAIRS
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BUDGET
DIVISION**

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AFFAIRS
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**POLITICAL
ECONOMICS
DIVISION**

**SPECIAL
PROJECTS
DIVISION**

**ADMINISTRATIVE
MANAGEMENT**

**VOTER
REGISTRATION**

THE PEOPLE

APPENDIX

During Solidarity Day Ceremonies, Abernathy reflected on achievements of the Poor Peoples' Campaign.*

Agriculture: the "discovery" of \$227 million the department was planning to return to the treasury (there was no assurance, however, that the funds would be spent, or if spent, used for food); the introduction of federal food programs into more than 200 of the poorest counties now with them; and a promise to increase the variety and nutritional values of federally distributed surplus foods.

Office of Economic Opportunity: the "discovery" by the office of an "extra" \$25 million that was to be applied to certain headstart, medical, and food programs in poor areas.

Health Education and Welfare: pledges to simplify welfare application procedures, eliminate "man-in-the-house" rules, and guarantee fair hearings for welfare clients where cases were closed; additionally pledges of more specially trained teachers to work in poverty areas, and the improvement of health facilities in poor neighborhoods.

Department of Labor: pledges of jobs for 100,000 unemployed workers by January 1969.

State Department: Abernathy asserted that Secretary of State Dean Rusk had agreed to examine the land claims of the Mexican-American in the Campaign and to coordinate through the Agriculture Department, United States food programs abroad with those at home so that hungry Americans received from the government food equally as nutritious as that given to hungry foreigners.

Housing and Development: a pledge not to relocate residents of Urban Renewal areas until suitable housing could be engaged for them.

Justice Department: an agreement to take action against the use of Mexican braceros as strike breakers on large farms in the Southwest and West.

Interior Department: a pledge to move faster in developing school systems on reservations that would be controlled by the Indians.

In each case Abernathy said that the responses, while significant were not enough and vowed four more times to stay in the capital until more acceptable reasons were wrung from the agencies. What an acceptable response would be spelled out in a six-point summary of Campaign demands:

*Taken from Charles Fager's Uncertain Resurrection, pp. 114-115.

1. An end to hunger
2. An end of bad housing
3. An end to unemployment and guaranteed incomes for those unable to work
4. Adequate health care for all citizens
5. Full equality care for all citizens
6. An end to violence and repression at home and abroad /without specific mention of Vietnam/.

Abernathy reportedly made a statement to the press at 8:30 A.M. on the Monday morning following the day of the expiration of the permit:

We state now as we have stated before: we will not leave our homes in this city involuntarily. We will honor the permit granted us by the Indians, who hold a more rightful claim to the land than the government of the United States. We therefore plan to remain here and continue with our Poor Peoples' Campaign to demand from the departments of government and the Congress food for hungry people, jobs for the jobless, decent, safe and sanitary housing for every family and a floor under the income of all America.

Immediately following this press briefing I will pay a visit to the Department of Agriculture and Secretary Freeman. I will tell him there is more that he can do, and that he must do it now. From there I will go to the Congress, to ask to be heard by both the House and Senate on this hunger question. I must remind them that one-fifth of this nation goes to bed hungry every night while we pay farmers not to grow food, while we store food in barns and even dump in the ocean. It is likely that I will be arrested and my people with me, but the problem of hunger is so great, therefore our cause is so just that they will gladly accept whatever penalty is imposed upon us for doing the work we must do.

No matter what happens to me or to Resurrection City, the Poor Peoples' Campaign will go on. We are in Washington to stay until the people of America speak, until the Congress acts on this critical issue.

I leave here now to be about this important work. I invite all who believe with me to join on this journey to the Department of Agriculture, to the Capitol, and even to jail if this is where the road leads.*

*Ibid.

THE POOR PEOPLES' GOALS

The following was submitted by Senator Edward Brooke to the Congressional Record on June 13, 1968.

Mr. BROOKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Record a list of the goals of the Poor Peoples' Campaign as it appeared in the Washington Post this morning.

The members of the campaign are requesting specific actions on the part of both Congress and the administration; they have asked the assistance of the affected departments and agencies in achieving passage of legislation.

I believe that this list of goals will prove a useful focus for all Members of Congress concerned with the elimination of poverty and hunger in America and anxious to secure the right of all Americans to full participation in our society.

There being no objection, the list was ordered to be printed in the Record as follows:

TEXT OF DEMANDS TO COMBAT POVERTY

(Note. The Poor Peoples' Campaign yesterday issued a full listing of its demands for action by Federal agencies and Congress to combat poverty. The listing specifies those demands that it believes should be met immediately and those that should be acted on during the 1969 fiscal year, which begins July 1. The leaders indicated they would consider ending the Campaign if the demands marked with asterisks were met and some progress was made on the remainder.)

I. FEDERAL AGENCIES

Department of Agriculture-Immediate

1. Action on food programs, including specifically:

- a. Food program in all 1000 needful counties which will have full participation of the poor.
 - b. Issuance of free food stamps to no income and extremely low-income families, a scaling down of food stamp prices generally and an equitable distribution of amounts of food based on need rather than income.
 - c. Emergency distribution of supplementary food in those counties among the 256 hungry counties, cited by the Citizens Board of Inquiry, whose present food programs fail to reach substantial numbers of the poor.
 - d. Immediate expansion of the quantity of commodities distributed and substantial improvement of the quality and variety of food given under the Commodity Distribution Program to insure a balanced and nutritious diet to recipients.
 - e. Substantial increase in the number of free and reduced price school lunches to needy children.
2. The Department should prepare specific guidelines and a timetable for implementation to be agreed upon by Poor Peoples' Campaign representatives for ending discrimination in key farm programs, particularly Stabilization and Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration and Federal Extension Service.

For Fiscal Year 1969

1. Request and strongly fight for appropriations under the Food Stamp and Commodity Distribution Programs sufficient to provide food for the 10.7 million persons determined by the Department to have seriously inadequate diets.
2. Establish a continuing structure for involvement of the poor in planning and evaluating programs, affecting them.
3. Double the request for and fight for appropriations for increased cooperatives among rural Mexican-Americans, Indian and Negro poor and establish a specific timetable and guidelines for establishing cooperative among these groups.
4. Devise a plan to revise the present acreage diversion policy and to provide more equitable distribution of funds to aid poor farmers.

Office of Economic Opportunity-Immediate

1. OEO should immediately devise a plan whereby a specific number of promising subprofessionals at local levels can be brought up

to the local, regional, and national OEO staffs: OEO should establish a program analogous to the Federal Management Intern Program for poor people and sub-professionals who have demonstrated skill in working with the poor. OEO should commit a specific percentage of consultant slots to the poor.

2. OEO, in consultation with a delegation of representatives from the Poor Peoples' Campaign, should devise specific guidelines for citizen participation and a simple appeals procedure and forum for all variety of complaints.
3. OEO should immediately establish a stronger rural development staff and program with a technical assistance staff for rural areas which lack trained professional personnel to institute and design programs. Such staffs should be available to come into communities and help the poor start programs and train local people to run them.
4. OEO should fight for the supplemental appropriation bill for summer jobs and Head Start.
5. OEO should fight for the full requested funding of its program for the coming fiscal year without any further eroding of the rights of the poor.

For Fiscal Year 1969

1. OEO should set up a permanent "ombudsman" for the poor for continuous policing of its programs by those affected.
2. OEO must devise a budget for the following fiscal year (FY 1970) adequate to wage a serious battle against poverty rather than the present inadequate scrimmage.

Health, Education and Welfare-Immediate

1. HEW should endorse and fight for legislation pending in this session of Congress that would relieve some of the worst aspects of the welfare system. It should fight particularly for the repeal of the "freeze" and compulsory work requirements of the 1967 Amendments to the Social Security Act, for mandatory provisions for support of families with unemployed fathers, and a Federal national minimum standard of welfare benefits.
2. HEW should act now to end by administrative decision state "man-in-the-house" rules and require states to continue to make full assistance payments during appeals from decisions to reduce or terminate payments.

3. In the light of the recent Supreme Court decision, HEW should abolish freedom-of-choice desegregation plans and adopt clear guidelines in consultation with representatives of the Poor Peoples' Campaign which would require and result in the eradication of the dual school systems in the southern states by the fall of 1968.
4. HEW should devise a specific plan whereby school districts receiving Federal funds are required to provide for participation of poor people in the design, development, operation and evaluation of education programs. To enable such participation to be effective, school districts must be required to make per-pupil expenditure and pupil achievement data available to local citizens. If legislation is needed to do any of this, then the administration should propose it in the Congress.
5. HEW must come up with a specific action program for bringing adequate and essential health services to the poor and for radically reducing the level of deaths among poor infants and their mothers.

For Fiscal Year 1969

1. HEW should devise a comprehensive and specific plan and timetable for abolishing northern school segregation.
2. HEW should devise a structure for specific numbers of the poor to participate in decision-making on programs which affect their interests.
3. HEW should implement more experimental income maintenance programs in rural areas and on Indian reservations.

Department of Labor--Immediate

1. The Secretary of Labor should endorse and fight for passage of a job bill this session of Congress which will substantially increase employment opportunities for the poor in both private and public sectors, such as the Clark Emergency Employment Act.
2. The Secretary must revise the operational guidelines and structure of the existing programs of the Department, in consultation with the poor, to insure full participation of the poor in the decision-making process as well as in employment opportunities at all levels, particularly manpower training, the Concentrated Employment Program and the Employment Service. Specific numbers of the poor to be agreed upon should participate in program planning and implementation.

For Fiscal Year 1969

1. The Department should establish a plan and timetable for vigorous enforcement of fair employment regulations. In particular, ways should be found for employment of specific numbers of poor and the minority groups in employment service commissions in each state.
2. More vigorous contract compliance should be implemented to end discrimination.
3. Devise a comprehensive jobs package to eradicate unemployment.

Department of Justice

1. Greatly increase numbers of school suits against northern school districts.
2. Greatly increase number of employment suits to end discrimination.

Housing and Urban Development--Immediate

1. Devise a specific structure and guidelines for inclusion of specific percentages of poor people in the planning process of programs designed to help them, particularly model cities.
2. Specifically fight for passage of the pending housing bill in this session of Congress and insure that a majority of houses to be built under this legislation shall be for low-income groups. HUD must also support the amendment to the bill which requires that poor people be employed in the planning and construction of low-income housing to the greatest extent feasible. HUD must design machinery that will bring poor people and contractors together in the business of supplying housing.
3. Devise guidelines which will relocate persons who have been displaced for urban renewal programs until adequate housing is secured.
4. Devise a specific recruitment program for Mexican-Americans in policymaking decisions both in the Southwest and in Washington.

For Fiscal Year 1969

1. Draw up a plan for establishment of new communities with housing and job opportunities for the poor in rural areas.

2. Devise specific guidelines for enforcement of the new Fair Housing Act of 1968 in consultation with representatives from the Poor Peoples' Campaign.

Department of State

Establish an interagency committee consisting of representatives of the poor and the Departments of State, Justice and Interior to study the question of legal ownership of the disputed lands under the Treasury of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

Department of Interior

1. Devise a model school system for Indian children in the communities where they live, with full community control and full Federal responsibility for provision of adequate resources for such a system.
2. Devise a specific plan for creating jobs and housing on Indian reservations, and adequate assistance for Indians wishing to relocate in the cities.

Legislative Priorities

1. Passage of a jobs bill (the Clark Emergency Employment Bill) providing for employment in private and public sectors.
2. Passage of the pending housing bill.
3. Repeal of the "freeze" and compulsory work requirements of the 1967 Social Security Act enactment of mandatory provision for support of families with unemployed fathers and of a Federal minimum standard of welfare.
4. Passage of the collective-bargaining legislation for farm workers.
5. Maintain level of appropriations requested for school lunch and breakfast programs, poverty program, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and other social programs which affect the poor.
6. Take adequate legislative steps to supplement the ability of the Secretary of Agriculture to provide food for every hungry person by greatly increasing the appropriation for the food stamp and commodity programs, and retention of the Jarvis Amendment on Section 32 to free \$227 million for food programs this fiscal year.

For Fiscal Year 1969

1. Pass legislation providing a guaranteed annual income as a matter of right for those who cannot or should not work.
2. Pass legislation adequate to insure that every American citizen will have a decent job at decent wages and a decent house at reasonable cost.

PROGRAMME

Presiding: Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, President
Emeritus, Morehouse College

Dr. Wyatt T. Walker, Pastor
Canaan Baptist Church of Christ,
New York City

"The Star Spangled Banner"

Invocation.... Rabbi Jacob Philip Rudin, President
Synagogue Council of America

* * *

Speaker ...Mrs. Johnnie Tillmon, National Chairman
Welfare Rights Organization

Speaker Walter Reuther, President
United Auto Workers

Speaker Gilberto Gerena Valentin
Home Town, Puerto Rico, New York City

* SOLIDARITY PROGRAM

Speaker..... Mrs. Mahalia Jackson, representing
Ponca Indians, Ponca City, Oklahoma

SpeakerThe Honorable Edward W. Brooke, Senator
Massachusetts

Speaker..... Reier Lopez Tijerina
Alianza de Pueblos Libres, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Speaker Roy Wilkins, Executive Director
National Association for the Advancement
of Colored People

Prayer..... The Rev. C. K. Steele, Vice President
Southern Christian Leadership Conference

* * *

Presentation of Citizens of

Resurrection City.... The Rev. Bernard Lafayette,
National Coordinator, Poor People's Campaign
Rodolpho (Corky) Gonzales
Crusade for Justice, Denver, Colo.

Speaker ...Whitney M. Young, Jr., Executive Director
National Urban League

In Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

... The Rev. Andrew J. Young, Executive
Vice Chairman, Southern Christian Leadership Conf.

Mrs. Mary Gurley
"I Trust in God"

Speaker and Selection...Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.

* * *

Selection Miss Mahalia Jackson

Introduction.....The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, Chairman
of the Board, Southern Christian Leadership Conf.

Speaker Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, President
Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Selection..... Miss Aretha Franklin
"Beams of Heaven As I Go"

LitanyThe Rev. Jesse Jackson, Director
Operation Breadbasket
Southern Christian Leadership Conference

"We Shall Overcome"

Benediction...The Right Rev. John D. Bright, First
Episcopal Dist. AME Church, New York City

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